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Nubische Grammatik, mit einer Einleitung über die Völker und Sprachen Afrika's, von R. LEPSIUS. Berlin, 1880. 8vo, pp. [xii] cxxvi, 506.

This grammar of the Nubian language is the fruit of long-continued studies on the part of its distinguished author. Its beginning dates back nearly forty years, to his memorable expedition to Egypt and Ethiopia (1842-6), in connection with which his first acquaintance with the language was made, a vocabulary gathered, a book of the New Testament (Mark's Gospel) translated into Nubian, and a collection of native songs (unfortunately afterwards lost) written down. The presence of an educated Nubian in Germany somewhat later (1853) gave the opportunity of continuation and revision. Professor Lepsius does not explain why the publication of his results was delayed for more than twenty-five years longer: we may conjecture that it was owing partly to absorption in his Egyptian studies, and partly to his desire to elaborate the general views as to African race and language laid down by him in the Introduction (126 pages), which to the great majority of readers will be the part of the volume of highest interest, and with which we have especially to concern ourselves here. The grammar itself occupies a little less than two hundred pages, and is most clearly and attractively worked out (we miss in it a designation of the accent of the words given, which might, one would think, have been easily added); then follow sixty pages of texts, and near two hundred of vocabulary (Nubian-German and German-Nubian); and the work closes with an appendix of sixty pages on the dialects of the language, along with a criticism of Reinisch's recent work on the Nubian.

The interest taken by Lepsius in the general problem of African languages has been repeatedly testified before: his "Standard Alphabet" included a detailed account of their phonology, and presented also a classification of them, a forerunner of the more complete classification, with exposition of its grounds in their structure and relations, which the Introduction to this volume contains. The subject is one upon which great discordance of views prevails, even (or especially) among those who have given most attention to it; and it would be premature to regard the questions involved in it as definitely settled until special students shall have worked themselves out to a better agreement respecting them. Within the limited space of even so ample an Introduction to the grammar of a single tongue, Lepsius is of course able to give only a brief sketch of his views and the reasons for them, putting them forth for his contemporaries to criticize from their various points of view; without at all pretending to the knowledge which would enable me to judge them with authority, I desire here to state them succinctly, and to examine their relation to certain general principles of the science of language.

Professor Lepsius rejects, with good reason, the method of classification of human races based on so trivial a characteristic as the shape of the cross-section of their hairs, a method which has been adopted and worked out with learning and ingenuity by Friedrich Müller of Vienna; and, in striking antithesis to this scholar, who advances the somewhat paradoxical doctrine that among the four great African races recognized by him the physical differences are as great as among all the other divisions of mankind, he holds that the various African tribes, including even the Hottentots, are physically one race; pointing out, in addition to the common characteristics usually recognized, a forward-tilted position of the pelvis, setting the upper part of the body more

at an angle with the legs than in other races. The inhabitants, however, of Egypt, and of the countries stretching westward and southward from Egypt, he regards as intruders, of Asiatic descent: he calls them by the customary name, Hamites, and divides them into Egyptian, Libyan (Tuareg and Hausa), and Cushite (Beja, Galla, Somali, etc.); while the Semites (Abyssinian and Arabian), ultimately related with these, are still more recent immigrants from Asia. The Hottentot language, as will be noticed later, is classed as an offshoot from the Cushitic.

As set over against the tongues of these intruders, the disposition of the proper African languages is as follows: Nearly the whole of the southern peninsula of the continent, from 7° or 8° N. L. almost to the Cape, is occupied by the dialects of a single well-marked and compact family, the South African or Zingian or Bantu (Lepsius, following Bleek, prefers the last-named designation, which we will accordingly employ); while a broad band across the centre of the continent where it is widest, an immense border-land, as it were, toward Hamite and Semite, in extent nearly or quite equal to the Bantu territory, contains a mass of varying languages, discordant in structure and vocabulary. To explain this state of things, Lepsius holds and endeavors to prove that the Bantu and the Hamitic (of course, in their older, prehistoric forms) are the original sole factors, and that the zone between them is the diversified product of their collision and mutual influence and mixture.

This generalization of Professor Lepsius is a very grand and attractive one; and if it is or shall be well established, the working-out of the history in detail will be a most important department of the study of language. The leading point of general linguistic science involved is that of the mixture of languages, of the degree and kind of influence which one tongue can and does exert upon another in consequence of contact, along with more or less of mixture of races. If from causes of this character such effects can result as are here assumed, then the views hitherto prevalent must be very considerably modified. This is seen and pointed out by our author, who says (p. lxxxv) that the assumption now generally made, that the vocabulary of one language may indeed in considerable measure pass over into another, but not its grammatical forms and their use, is proved by African linguistics to be a prejudice. It could not, of course, enter into Professor Lepsius's plan to discuss the theoretic point in full within the restricted limits of his *Introduction*; but it will probably be in general thought that he has passed over it with regrettable brevity, considering its cardinal importance to his theory. An assumption may be summarily dealt with by making a contrary assumption; but the doctrine in question does not appear to be an assumption, but rather a scientific deduction from all the facts of language-mixture, historically authenticated and of unmistakable interpretation, hitherto at command. It is not derived from the mixtures taking place within the limits of a single family alone, like the Indo-European, but from those of tongues of different stock and discordant structure. It seems to accord with the best views obtainable as to the mode of working of the language-forces. It cannot, then, be set aside in a sentence as a mere prejudice. That we are authorized to erect it into a universal law, admitting no exceptions, is by no means claimed.<sup>1</sup> But if it be in truth inapplicable to the peculiar

<sup>1</sup> Some of the points involved have been discussed by the writer in a paper on "Mixture in Language," presented to the Am. Philol. Association, and expected to appear in the latter's *Transactions* for 1881.

conditions of early African language, the grounds of its inapplicability ought to admit of some sort of demonstration; and till that is furnished, it will be felt to stand as a powerful obstacle in the way of general acceptance of a theory involving its rejection, and will compel the inquiry whether, after all, some other theory may not be found capable of explaining the facts in question.

The method by which our author proposes to establish his view as to the genesis of the intermediate band of heterogeneous languages is to set up a certain list of leading particulars in which the Bantu and Hamitic tongues differ, and by these to test the others, ascribing the various agreements and disagreements to the influence of the one or of the other combining element. This method is not without its uncertainties. Every door must be either shut or open; with regard to any given peculiarity, every dialect must either possess it or be without it; and hence it is always possible to take the differences of two tongues, and to find that certain other tongues arrange themselves on the side either of the first or of the second as regards each point of difference. It is not by any means denied that valuable truth may be brought to light by such a comparison; we have only to be careful not to look upon it as a demonstration; that character can be given to it only by the whole complex of conditions involved: as, the circumstances of locality (which here are evidently altogether in favor of Lepsius's theory), the number and importance of the criteria, and, above all, the question whether they are explainable by the cause alleged, or are not plausibly explainable by any other.

From among the mass of differences that distinguish Hamitic and Bantu speech, Professor Lepsius makes a selection of twelve as test-points or criteria. They are, in brief statement, as follows: 1. The use in Bantu of classificatory prefixes to the nouns, in singular and plural, dividing them into so many classes, or declensions, or genders, on a basis of resemblances and differences not now clear, though still apparently in some measure traceable. This is the most fundamental item in the well-known peculiarity of the South-African as prevailingly prefix-languages (the use of suffixes, however, being not entirely wanting), while the Hamitic agrees with nearly all the other families of the globe in having its external structure made almost exclusively by suffixes. With this stands closely connected, 3. the use of noun-making prefixes in the languages of the middle zone, against that of suffixes in Hamitic; and a part of the same general style of structure are, 4. the use of prefixed or of suffixed pronominal endings in the verbs of the two languages respectively; 5. that of prefixes accordant with those of the noun-form, added in Bantu to the words agreeing with the leading noun, making a sort of alliterative concord, of course wanting in Hamitic; and 6. that of prepositions in Bantu, but of postpositions in a part of the Hamitic tongues, namely the Cushite; for the Egyptian and Libyan have also prepositions. Further, 9. the object following the verb is in Bantu, but not in Hamitic, anticipated by a pronominal element prefixed to the verb after the subject, somewhat after the familiar manner of the incorporating or polysynthetic languages. Again, as regards the order of elements in the sentence: 7. the Bantu genitive stands after the governing noun, the Hamitic genitive either before (Cushite) or after (Egyptian and Libyan); and, 8. the Bantu verb comes always between its subject and object, while the Hamitic regularly either begins or ends the sentence (but it is pointed out later, on p. 1, that the Bantu verb-position is shared also by the Libyan branch of Hamitic).

Yet again, as regards phonetic form: 10. a Bantu syllable generally ends with a vowel, or with only a nasal after the vowel, while no such rule applies to the Hamitic; and 11. Bantu words and syllables often take a prefixed consonantal, especially nasal, element, viewed by our author as generally the relic of a former complete syllable. Then, 12. he claims as belonging originally to all the negro-languages the use of tones, like those of Chinese and the other monosyllabic tongues—that is to say, of differences of pitch and modulation applied to express material differences of meaning; he mentions in detail the authorities on which the acceptance of this element rests, as well as those (more numerous) who have overlooked or denied it: nothing of the sort, of course, occurs in Hamitic (although one authority thinks he finds it in Hausa). Finally is to be noted the criterion given in the series as 2: namely, the discordance in regard to gender-distinction founded on sex, which is present in Hamitic, but wanting in Bantu.

There is evidently considerable difference among these points in regard to their authority and value as criteria. Thus, the 12th, the element of significant tone, cannot well be much relied on until the grammarians of African languages shall have come to a better agreement with reference to its occurrence and its nature. A characteristic of so well-known and long cultivated a tongue as Zulu, for example, which is unrecognized by Grout and Doehne, and rests only upon the authority of Endemann, cannot but be regarded with suspicion. And the more, since the character of African, and especially of South-African, language is very different from that which is generally believed to have led the Chinese and other structureless languages to press this element into the service of their vocabulary: as our author himself says (p. lxix), it "has for its sole object, in all the languages in which it occurs, to increase the means of differentiation"—and here, certainly, there is no lack of other means to that end. Then again, not much stress, it would appear, can be laid upon the 6th and 7th and 8th points—the place of prepositions, of governed "genitives," and of verbs in the sentence—since respecting them the Hamitic tongues themselves are not agreed: not to speak of the freedom and variety of arrangement prevailing among dialects of the same stock elsewhere in the world, and the obvious possibility that usage as to such matters should admit of variation by the processes of natural growth and change in African language, as it has in Asiatic and European. Nor, once more, does it seem as if such phonetic differences as form the subject of the 10th and 11th points might not well enough be developed, without foreign interference, in languages of common descent (look, for example, at the great difference between Italian and French as regards admitted finals or initial sibilant with mute, or between Sanskrit and Prakrit as regards the general complexity of syllabic structure). The former of the two is of least consequence; the putting on of a prefixed nasal might be more deeply characteristic; but if this nasal be in fact the relic of a former complete initial syllable, it would only constitute an item under the comprehensive head of prefixed elements. There remain, accordingly, as of probably highest value, the two matters of prefix- or suffix-structure, and of the absence or presence of sexual gender-distinction. These we will proceed to consider more fully.

The character of prefix-language belongs in a more marked degree to the Bantu than to any of the tongues of the middle zone, while in many of the

latter it is entirely wanting. Only the Bantu has that intricate system of distinction of noun-classes, and of their singulars and plurals, by different syllables added at the beginning, which syllables then have their correspondents in the qualifying and predicative words that follow, making an alliterative concord which is one of the curiosities of human expression, and is often illustrated.<sup>1</sup> In other languages (e. g. Efik, Ibo, Yoruba), there is an equally prevalent use of noun-prefixes, but they are rather of the nature of general derivative elements, not class-making or generic. Yet others (Temne, Bullom) use their prefixes to make a much less distinct and elaborate classification of objects, hardly more than a division into animate and inanimate. The most remarkable variation, however, is presented by the Pūl (Fūlbē), which uses suffixes in the manner and office of the Bantu prefixes; but, in addition, it has its nouns begin only with consonants, and often varies these initial consonants after the manner of prefixes (thus, *p-ülo*, sing., 'red man,' but *f-ülbē*, pl.); whence the natural conjecture is expressed by our author that the initials in question are, after all, concealed or metamorphosed prefixes. And yet further, by a peculiarity which Lepsius calls more striking than anything he has met with elsewhere in language, the initial changes of words signifying human beings are in all respects precisely the reverse of those shown in other words: for example, while *p* of a singular human appellative changes in the plural to *f* (as in the word instanced above), and singular *f* remains unchanged, the singular *f* of an animal or thing changes in the plural to *p* (thus, *f-itta-ndu*, 'soul,' to *p-itta-li*), and singular *p* is permanent. The Wolof (it is believed, nearly related with Pūl) has also the variability of initial consonants, and the same variety of suffixes, only without classifying value. And in both there is alliteration, or at least relative concordance, among words syntactically connected. On the other hand, the Pūl prefixes its personal endings, while the Wolof suffixes them. Once more, the extensive Mande or Mandingo group, with some others, are as devoid of all use of prefixes as are the Hamitic languages themselves.

These are specimens of the great and perplexing variety of structure exhibited by the negro-languages; obviously, there are problems of growth here which will resist for a long time, if not (owing to lack of sufficient recorded evidence) forever, the best attempts of philologists to explain them, even in their main features. The immediate question is, whether we ought to accept as sufficient and satisfactory our author's general reference of them to the shaping influence of contact and mixture with Hamitic-speaking peoples on the part of speakers of Bantu dialects. For myself, I do not feel ready to do this, considering the question, hitherto at least an open one, as to the admissibility of such a cause as producing such effects, and considering the apparently unique nature of the phenomena, regarded as brought about in this way. Languages of diverse kindred and structure have elsewhere in the world

<sup>1</sup> Professor Lepsius's selected example is:

*a-BA-ntu b-etu a-BA-hle BA-ya-bonakala, si-BA-tanda,*  
'people our handsome appear, we them love';

where *ba* is the governing plural prefix to the personal noun *ntu*; the corresponding sentence with the noun in the singular, meaning 'man,' would be:

*u-MU-ntu w-etu o-MU-hle U-ya-bonakala, si-MU-tanda.*

bordered and interpenetrated one another without any analogous results. Perhaps more of the discordance than our author is inclined to allow is owing to discordant growth out of a less developed general condition, rather than to the break-down and working-over of a fully wrought-out structure like the Bantu. We are accustomed to see the grammatical apparatus of a language ruined, in form or in application, under the influence of mixture with foreign material; and the loss or obscuration of the system of class-prefixes, of alliterative concordance, and so on, involves nothing strange or unexpected; but the elaboration of the Pūl grammar out of the Bantu or its like, under a Hamitic pressure, seems unaccountable without the admission of very powerful growing and changing forces in the Pūl itself. I do not know what authorizes us to admit that processes of inflection or derivation, or modes of construction, are ever taken directly out of one language into another; or that foreign materials can be worked even secondarily into linguistic structure, except where the receiving language is in a plastic state, making new formations of its own. In tongues of agglutinative style and habit, we must be careful not to limit too narrowly the capacities of new production; and a notable example of their work in Africa, in the recent establishment of a *quasi* gender-distinction in certain tongues, will be pointed out a little further on.

It may even be questioned whether we do not attribute too much importance in a linguistic respect to the wide extension of the Bantu dialects, which gives to the African language-field the aspect of a body of Bantu territory with a frontier—a broad one, to be sure—of heterogeneous speech. Is there, after all, anything in this to prove that the Bantu may not have been originally even as one of the others, and have won afterward its immense spread, by the aid of favoring circumstances, along with superior endowments on the part of its speakers? Such disproportionate growth of one of the members of a group seems neither impossible nor unknown: the Latin in southern Europe is a notable example of it (one depending, to be sure, on an order of forces unknown in Africa); there may be added the Russian in eastern Europe, and the English and Spanish in America. The acceptance of a view like this would, of course, further imply that African language-structure was in its growing stage at the period of separation, and that the present condition of the divided dialects shows the results of the carrying-out of originally common tendencies in varying manner and degree, as well as the deadening of other tendencies and the uprise of new ones—in all which, the influence of contact and mixture with strange speech might have borne its part. Perhaps there is evidence in the languages themselves, when completely mastered, sufficient to show whether such a hypothesis is or is not tenable; but the first impression of the facts so clearly set forth by Professor Lepsius upon my mind, at least, is that of growth, rather than of metamorphosis under pressure; and the coherence of the Bantu dialects, as compared with the discordance of even the more nearly related of the northern tongues, might be taken as an indication of relatively recent divergence.

There remains for consideration one point of very prominent interest and importance, that of sexual gender. As a criterion, this makes a pretty sharp division between the whole body of African languages (except the Hottentot, of which later) and the Hamitic: all the latter distinguish nouns as masculine and feminine; all the former fail to do so. And yet, this failure is not without

one highly curious exception, at least in appearance: a series of dialects on the uppermost Nile (Bari, Oigob, Bongo, Shilluk) have the sex-distinction plainly marked, in article, demonstrative, etc. Lepsius, however, finds that in Oigob the fundamental distinction appears rather to be between what is big, strong, imposing on the one side, and what is little, weak, despicable on the other; the two sexes falling into the respective classes according to the usual method of estimate of a barbarous people. If his apprehension and interpretation of the facts is a correct one, we find in them (as hinted above) a striking evidence of the constructive forces recently inherent in African speech: a little body of languages having wrought out, independently of foreign influence (which even Professor Lepsius does not feel tempted to suggest in this case), a distinction which in most of them bears the aspect of a sexual-gender one; a single dialect alone betraying the more material basis on which it rests. Possibly we have here a pregnant and much-needed hint as to how our own gender may have arisen: if it had its inception in a class-division of other character and wider reach, into which sex entered as only one element, but one that came to be the prominent and to seem the fundamental one, then at least a part of the difficulties surrounding this hitherto insoluble problem in linguistic growth will be eliminated.

Lepsius attributes a more decisive weight to the element of gender-distinction than most students of language are accustomed to do: whether rightly or wrongly, must be left for the future to determine. Thus, its absence from the Nubian, the language forming the special subject of his volume, seems to him (p. lxxii) enough by itself to prove that this dialect is African and not Hamitic, although in all his other test-points its character is Hamitic. And yet we have in our own Indo-European family a familiar example, the Persian, of a language that has totally lost its old system of genders. Again, it is especially because the Hottentot has genders that our author classes it with full confidence as a tongue of Hamitic origin. His view is, that the race who speak it became separated from the mass of Hamites in the north-east by the crowding outward of the South African or Bantu peoples, and was gradually driven southward and westward, becoming at the same time so mixed with negro elements of population as at last to lose entirely its primitive physical type and assume one that is even exaggeratedly African, with the exception of a more reddish tinge of color. At the same time, no correspondences of material are to be traced between the Hottentot and any of the Hamitic dialects, which would be a natural enough result of such a history; and, while such formative elements as it has are suffixed and not prefixed, it is almost purely monosyllabic: which, again, so far as can be seen at present, may be a consequence of reduction from earlier fulness, in accordance with our author's opinion, instead of constituting an original characteristic, as some others have maintained. What is more extraordinary, now, than anything else is that the specific signs of gender—namely, *b* for masculines and *t* and *s* for feminines—are identically the same in Hottentot and in Beja, a Cushitic dialect of Hamitic, and nearly related with those of the other Hamitic dialects. Lepsius puts this correspondence prominently forward, but does not appear to insist upon it as an absolute demonstration of the truth of the claimed relationship. And, as would seem, with good reason. For it were hard to tell which should be deemed more incredible: that such a correspondence should be accidental merely, having no

historical basis; or that the Hottentot signs should be in truth the inherited counterparts of those of the Beja, kept safe and unaltered, in spite of the wearing out of all the rest of the Hamitic structure, the total transformation of the vocabulary, and the thorough Africanization of even the physical type of the race. Either alternative seems impossible of acceptance; and one might well hesitate before pronouncing the former the harder of the two.

Yet again, Lepsius pronounces (p. xxvi) their agreement in the item of gender-distinction a sufficient evidence that Indo-European, Semitic, and Hamitic are branches of one and the same original stock. Now it is certainly a very striking fact that these three great light-complexioned races, leaders one after another in the world's civilization, and probably enough deriving their origin from the same quarter of the globe, are the only ones (with the exception, to be sure, of the Hottentot and the Oigob and its kin !) to have established gender as an element of their grammar; and I would not venture categorically to deny that its best explanation may one day be found to lie in their original unity; but I cannot at present think it probable—much less, already proved. Gender has altogether the aspect of a distinction gradually established in the course of structural growth, and not dating back to that structureless stage in which, if anywhere, the unity of these three great divisions of human speech must have lain. The whole subject is, to be sure, rather too imperfectly comprehended to allow of our maintaining this with dogmatism; but dogmatism on the other side is also just as much forbidden. Lepsius speaks (p. xxiv) of "frequent enough" traces in Indo-European of the original feminine sign *t* in the "softened feminine *s*," and, without change, in the neutral *t* or *d* of the pronouns, and elsewhere. What he may be keeping back that occurs "elsewhere" cannot well have its importance estimated; but it ought, in order to have any real value, to be decidedly better than that which he quotes: I do not know what a "feminine *s*" is, nor how the neuter-ending *d* of half-a-dozen pronominal stems can witness in favor of a primeval general feminine *t*.

Our author endeavors to support his opinion by establishing a psychological or moral basis for the generic classes of the African languages and the sexual genders of the three white families respectively. Noticing (p. xxi) that, among the more or less indistinct and confused divisions of objects made by the former device, those of human beings and other creatures, or of persons and things, are best maintained, and in many of the languages the only ones left, he conjectures the ground of them "to lie in the position of individuals of the oldest uncultivated races with reference to surrounding Nature. The animal world and the whole of Nature with its superior forces assumed toward man an impossibly hostile attitude; against their ever-present threatening he found aid and protection only in his fellow-men. Hence the importance which he lays upon the rapid and distinct designation of each object according to its friendly, hostile, or indifferent relation to himself." I must confess myself unable to appreciate the force of this argument. Lepsius holds the Bantu system of classes to be the original one, of which the others are wrecks and remnants; and it, certainly, is in no working order for such a defensive purpose, nor does it show signs of ever having been an efficient weapon. If human beings and all the other objects, of whatever class, have their distinctive names, how will even a sudden warning against, for instance, a hostile lion or thunderbolt be quickened by fastening to the name of it a class-sign that

shows it not to be a human being? Can any one imagine a practical way of putting our own *who* and *what* to use after such a fashion? Moreover, nature is full also of useful and helpful objects of every class, inanimate and animate; and, after all, a man's worst foes, as well as his nearest allies, are they of his own species: a pronominal distinction between friend and enemy, or fellow-tribesman and stranger, would be worth much more than all this intricate and mixed-up system of classes. Finally, the wild beasts and other products and phenomena of Asia are at least not less formidable than those of other continents, and the Asian man needed as much grammatical assistance in making head against them as the African.

The other side, however, of Professor Lepsius's theory is intended to explain the discordance between African classes and Asiatic genders. He points out (p. xxiv) that the three gender-races have been, and are likely always to continue to be, the leading ones in human history: in fact, the only "historical" ones. It is not, he thinks (p. xxvi), to be disputed "that all race-capacity of higher development must proceed from a deepened moral basis, which in great part, if not mainly, finds its expression in the family. But it is especially the distinction and division of the sexes, and their prevailingly moral regulation and antithesis in marriage, on which the family rests." And here is the desired psychological foundation for grammatical gender. "The collective race-mind, which is always faithfully reflected by language, was so dominated by this [sexual] mode of contemplating things as to transfer it from human beings to the whole of surrounding Nature, and to divide between the two sexes all her individualized and designated phenomena."

This argument also seems to lie open to the charge of fancifulness. That the higher endowment of the successful races in their first barbarous stages expressed itself in any measure by conformity to our present laws of morality is not easily to be credited; it appeared rather in an intellectual superiority which enabled them to find out and gradually incorporate in arts and institutions (of course, not without the aid of favoring circumstances) whatever would tend to their material advancement. The virtues that make for progress are different at different periods of progress. The sexual morality of that period when Hamite, Semite, and Indo-European were members of one society (supposing that this was ever the case) would be likely to please us as little in the contemplation as their respect for the rights of property and life outside their own tribal limits, or their treatment of the old and infirm. Nor is it clear that the due organization of the family has anything to do with grammatical gender. No language fails to be a gender-language so far as concerns human beings, and also all other creatures in whom the distinction of sex is a notable and practically important one. Every known tongue incorporates in words its apprehension of the distinction between man and woman, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, and so on, and can proceed without linguistic obstacle to construct its laws as to the relations of the sexes in such form as its changing and developing sense of what is conducive to welfare, and therefore right, shall at any time dictate. There is no difference in this respect between Semite and African and Mongol and Polynesian, any more than between the Frenchman, to whom everything is either masculine or feminine, the German, who has also a neuter which he cannot explain (he ranks 'woman' and 'child' under it), the Englishman, who says *he* and *she*, but only when he means actual

persons, and the Persian, who cannot do even that. The very essence of a gender-language is, not that it distinguishes the sexes, but that it treats also every sexless thing as if sexual, and classifies it accordingly. This seems to many a kind of homage paid to the sexual distinction, a testimony to the power of its moral control over the mind; but it may with more plausibility be claimed to be the very opposite—an attenuation and effacement of all distinctive meaning in sex, by assuming it artificially and falsely in the innumerable cases where it does not exist at all. Just so, it would hardly evidence a controlling sense of the profound difference between good and evil to call trees good and their fruit evil, doors good and windows evil, eyes good and noses evil, and so on through the whole universe; or a sense for form to class goodness and headaches as round, and birds and the weather as square; or a sense for color to attribute redness to souls and verbs, blueness to noises and nouns, and yellowness to countries and prepositions. The keenest and most ever-present apprehension of color, it should seem, would be testified by giving colored names to things that possess color, and to no others, noting the absence as well as the presence and varieties of the element. Finally, it is a telling fact, which should not be left out of sight in discussions as to gender, that the most central sexual words in our own family of languages, those in which the moral value of the distinction ought especially to show itself—namely, the words of relationship *father*, *mother*, *sister*, *brother*, *daughter*—have no gender-character of their own, but are made with the same suffix and share the same declension.

On the whole, our author's treatment of the subject of gender, though highly ingenious and full of suggestiveness, does not seem to bring us to any definite and satisfactory result. The distinction still remains, to all appearance, one of the accidents of speech, having no moral character, any more than belongs to a dual number or an instrumental case, of problematic origin, and obscure in its bearings until it shall be better understood.

We may remark, in leaving the subject, that to Professor Lepsius the clear retention in Hamitic of the signs of both genders, while Semitic has lost the separate masculine sign, and Indo-European mainly both, seems (p. xxvii) "one of the many indications that the Hamitic stem first left the primæval home, next the Semitic, and finally the Japhetic." This is in direct and refreshing antithesis to the view still widely held, that, because the Aryan (Indo-Iranian) branch of our own family has retained on the whole more that is primitive in its speech than the other branches have done, therefore the spot where we find it at the dawn of history must be close to the original home of the family. Elsewhere, however (p. xxiv), we are told that "no one questions that locally the original abode of the three families was in Asia, and in or near the Mesopotamian plains, and that they accordingly had a common point of dispersion." The author seems hardly justified in ignoring to this extent the large and respectable party (if not a majority) of linguistic scholars who are unconvinced of the relationship of these families, and of whom some have set up other definite theories as to the place of Indo-European unity, fixing it in Europe or even in Africa, while some, like myself, have endeavored to show that no conclusion whatever respecting the matter can be drawn from the character and distribution of the dialects constituting the family.

Lepsius utterly refuses (p. cvi) to admit alongside these three great historical and cultivated races a fourth, of so-called Turanian or Ural-Altaic connection, which should have laid in Mesopotamia (as Accadians, Sumerians, or whatever else we may call them) the foundation of culture afterward built upon successively by Semites and Indo-Europeans. He believes the Egyptians to have been the originators of that civilization, and the Cushites the intermediaries by whom it was carried eastward. The grounds of his belief he hardly more than hints at, but his name and fame lend it, as mere expression of opinion, a degree of authority; it is to be hoped that he will some time take occasion to discuss the subject more fully.

There are other matters either laid out or touched upon in this most interesting work, which, for lack of space, must be left unreported here. So, especially, the history of the Cushites and their place in ancient civilization: a theme upon which, as every one knows, a vast deal of nonsense has been written, but which by Lepsius is reduced to sober and distinct historic form. Whether the main question treated by him, that of the relationship of African languages, shall or shall not prove to have been finally settled by his researches, he will at any rate be found to have contributed greatly to its settlement, by gathering and marshalling the evidences, and opening up lines of inquiry that shall lead to the discovery of the truth.

W. D. WHITNEY.

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Qua in re *Hymni Homerici quinque majores inter se different antiquitate vel Homeritate* investigavit J. R. S. STERRETT, Ph. D. *Dissertatio inauguralis Monacensis.* Boston: Ginn & Heath, 1881.

Dr. Sterrett has done well in publishing, after the German fashion, his dissertation, for it is a real addition to the existing helps for the study of the Homeric hymns. We find, it is true, some things not quite to our mind. We wish he had not changed the old order of the hymns, and that the proof-reading had been more careful. We wish he had seen Berthold Suhle's essay on the Hymn to Aphrodite (Program of the Gymnasium at Stolp, 1877-8) and considered his arguments for a late date of that hymn. We wish he had weighed more carefully the suggestions of Windisch's Dissertation (1867), that the recognition of the digamma in the Hymns is due to the use of Homeric formulas and that therefore it does not furnish a sure criterion of their relative dates. But, in spite of these qualifications, we heartily welcome and commend this little book. The collections, in the prolegomena, of non-Homeric words and collocations of words are valuable, but the most useful part of the book in our judgment is the text of the five Hymns, in which, by a difference of type, the reader is enabled to see as he reads the number and character of the phrases borrowed from the Homeric poems, for each of which a reference is given in the footnotes. This device, which we do not remember to have seen adopted before, makes the book useful even to advanced students.

L. R. P.